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Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and the distinguished members of the Appropriations committee. My name is Heather Sandler and I am a graduate student in Social Work at UCONN, the former intern at the Alzheimer's Association and a volunteer to the Association.

I would first like to thank you for allowing me an opportunity to comment on Governor Rell's proposed 50% cut of the Alzheimer's Respite Care program.

Currently the program is funded with \$2.3 million as a line item in the Department of Social Services budget. The governor is proposing to cut that in half.

In Connecticut there are approximately 70,000 constituents who will have Alzheimer's disease by next year. The Respite Care program allows many to remain at home and be taken care of by family members or loved ones. Those caregivers provide approximately 97 million hours of unpaid care which would total over \$1 billion if they were to be paid. One of the 15 major recommendations of the Long-Term Care Needs Assessment, authorized and funded by the CGA in 2006, is to "Provide Support for informal caregivers". The research clearly indicates that supporting informal caregivers with programs such as the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program is critical to keeping individuals out of nursing homes; it keeps caregivers healthy, and allows for families to utilize various options in respite to allow for more cost effective respite solutions.

This proposed 50% cut to the Respite Care program will be devastating to the people in Connecticut with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and their caregivers. This program saves the state close to \$50 million in avoided nursing home costs.

This program is vital to families who live with Alzheimer's everyday. In the history of the program there has never been a waiting list for respite grants, now it has a list of 265 people. The caregivers who received grants in previous years cannot even apply to receive a new grant because the program was shut down by Governor Rell one week after she signed Public Act 09-75, a bill that updated the income and asset eligibility criteria and allowed PCA's to provide respite services under the program and increased grant size maximums. It is important to note that the legislature did provide funding for the Alzheimer's Respite Care program in FY 10-11 but the executive branch decided not proceed with opening this program because of the projected budget deficit.

I implore you to maintain the \$2.3 million in funding for the Alzheimer's Respite Care program and reopening of the program.